



Call for Applications

Colloquium: Nature and Territory

From epistemological reflection to methodological approach

Exchange of contributions and introduction to GIS

Istanbul, 21-22 May 2026

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In the social sciences, the notions of *nature* and *territory* maintain a close yet fundamentally ambivalent relationship. Nature has traditionally been conceived as a pre-existing entity, external to human societies and their institutions, whereas territory is understood as a spatial construct shaped by processes of appropriation, control, governance, and power. This distinction, largely inherited from modern epistemological frameworks, continues to structure ways of thinking about space, the environment, and relations between humans and non-humans.

This EURETES cycle proposes to put this dichotomy to the test by exploring zones of thresholds, friction, and intermediation where nature and territory are co-produced. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, the aim is to interrogate the epistemological frameworks, political dispositifs, and methodological tools through which these categories are constructed, negotiated, and contested. The first day, dedicated to sharing participants' contributions, is therefore linked to an introduction to cartographic methodological tools (GIS).

The cycle thus invites participants to rethink the boundaries between nature and territory not as fixed lines, but as relational spaces traversed by multiple forms of knowledge, situated practices, and heterogeneous power relations.

Day 1

This first day takes the form of an interdisciplinary conference bringing together researchers, doctoral students, and early-career scholars in the social sciences and humanities. It is structured around three complementary thematic axes.

Axis 1 – Epistemologies: thresholds, representations, and critiques

This axis seeks to examine the epistemological thresholds through which nature and territory are conceived, represented, and governed. By focusing on the liminal and interstitial spaces of knowledge production, it aims to question persistent binary frameworks such as nature/culture, local/global, and material/symbolic, which continue to shape the social sciences.

Contributions may analyze how epistemic practices do not merely describe territories, but actively participate in their material and symbolic constitution, by defining what becomes thinkable, visible, and governable. Particular attention will be given to alternative forms of knowledge and experience, such as indigenous, affective, embodied, and relational knowledges, capable of unsettling dominant paradigms of representation, control, and spatial imagination.

Axis 2 – Frictions: appropriating, protecting, contesting nature

Frictions emerge where divergent epistemologies, cosmologies, practices, and political projects encounter and confront one another. This axis focuses on these zones of confrontation, where nature becomes an object of appropriation, protection, or contestation.

Through the study of conflicts related to land use, ecological resources, and environmental governance, contributions may analyze how power operates through spatial and territorial dynamics. These frictions mobilize a wide range of actors, local communities, indigenous groups, activists, state institutions, transnational organizations, or private companies, each advancing distinct claims to legitimacy, knowledge, and belonging.

Here, friction is understood not only as a form of resistance, but also as a productive force capable of reconfiguring relationships between humans, non-humans, and environments.

Day 2

Axis 3 – Methods: tools, instruments, and cartographies

This axis invites a critical reflection on methodological approaches that allow for the visualization and spatialization of social realities. From ethnographic mapping to digital tools, how can research methods account for the intermediate, shifting, and conflictual spaces in which interactions between nature and territory unfold?

Participants are encouraged to consider maps, visualizations, and measuring instruments not as neutral supports, but as epistemic devices that shape what can be seen, known, and communicated. Particular attention will be paid to methods capable of capturing relational dynamics, spatial inequalities, and local forms of knowledge.

Training workshop: introduction to GIS

Youenn Gourain (Université Paris-Est, LATTS, IFEA)

Complementing the conference axes, this morning session offers an introductory workshop on **Geographic Information Systems (GIS)**, conceived as critical tools for analyzing relations between nature and territory. GIS makes it possible to address not only the temporal, but also the spatial dimensions of social, historical, and anthropological phenomena.

Still relatively underused in the social sciences, outside geography and urban studies, GIS offers significant potential for visualizing spatial inequalities, urbanization processes, the distribution of social practices, and relations between spaces and social groups. As tools of critical cartography, GIS contributes to the spatialization of knowledge production and opens up new epistemological perspectives.

Target audience

This cycle is primarily intended for master's students, doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, and scholars in the social sciences and humanities (anthropology, sociology, geography, history, political science, environmental studies, etc.) with an interest in questions of territory, nature, situated knowledges, and critical methods.

Submission Guidelines

Researchers interested in participating are invited to submit a short proposal outlining their intended contribution. Submissions should include **a title, an abstract of up to 200 words, and a brief biographical note** (institutional affiliation and research interests). Proposals should indicate how the contribution relates to one or more of the conference's thematic axes.

Proposals should be sent by February 5th to the following mail addresses : top.avcanur@gmail.com and elena.astafieva@ifea-istanbul.net. Applicants will be notified of the outcome after the review process 20 February 2026.

The language of the colloquium and the following event is **English**.

Perspectives

We aim to include this workshop in a training cycle with an annual meeting (in 2027 and 2028).